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## **—ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD NEWS—**

### **1. Inside the Gates: Flight surgeons take to air to learn how to treat air crews**

*Alaska's News Source by Dave Leval/March 3*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - A recent training flight for the 211th Rescue Squadron of the Alaska Air National Guard might have seemed like a flightseeing tour due to the spectacular views, but those on it say they're along for the ride not just for fun, but for work.

Lt. Col. Beth Lafleur is a flight surgeon with the 176th Medical Group. Her job is to help keep flight crews operating.

"I want to give them that peace of mind," Lafleur said before her latest flight. "I want them to know that we're watching out for them, that we're taking care of them."

Lafleur is from Louisiana and says she has been with the guard since 2014, after eight years with the Air Force.

"Decided I didn't want to leave, so I switched over to the guard," Lafleur said. "I also wanted to deploy and I know that the guard deploys a lot. And I wanted to go practice medicine in austere places."

Lafleur trains like other fliers and uses the flights to better understand what air crews do. What she learns helps treat those who need it, both physically and emotionally.

"The people who do these jobs, the operators, they do hard work," Lafleur said. "They're out there putting themselves in danger and seeing things that no person should see and experience."

Lafleur flies with the National Guard about twice a week. She says it's a highlight of the job and the care is not just for those in the air.

"We take care of everyone on base. That's why flight docs are kind of the jack of all trades," Lafleur said. "We are rated fliers, so we have to keep up the same currencies. I have to do four hours a month of flights."

Lafleur says another part of the job she enjoys is taking caring of people, who take care of us.

**Link:** <https://www.alaskasnewsresource.com/2021/03/04/inside-the-gates-flight-surgeons-take-to-the-air-to-learn-how-to-treat-air-crews/>

## **2. Inside the Gates: Alaska Air National Guard trains to help rescue American astronauts**

*Alaska's News Source by Dave Leval/Feb. 17*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - Members of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson's 212th Rescue Squadron took the plunge over Hawaii earlier this month, as part of the training for the pararescue members.

"You're not so worried about getting out the water," said Lt. Col. John Romspert, the unit's commanding officer. "You have time to work with the equipment, take your time, train new guys without worrying about hypothermia."

The 212th and the 144th Rescue Squadron took part in Exercise H2O, pararescue personnel jumped from one of their C-17s. The mission is to train to rescue American astronauts.

"Our astronauts are our national treasure," Romspert said. "Having the ability to have our C-17s be on the standby, is a pretty amazing thing. It's an awesome accomplishment."

The pararescue personnel have used the C-17s as part of their tools since 2011.

The training caught the eyes of NASA. The nation's space agency looked for help if its astronauts found themselves in a water rescue. The Air National Guard could drop multiple watercraft and pararescuers. They would care for the astronauts for up to 72 hours.

The Space X Crew Dragon spacecraft safely splashed down off the coast of Pensacola, Florida, in August 2020. It came after it launched in the first manned commercial space flight. The 212th and 144th squadrons remained on standby in South Carolina.

"It was a lot of pride that came to fruition for us," said Master Sgt. Lloyd Llaneza of the 144th Airlift Squadron, who served on both those crews. "Being down there, it was just a great experience."

"Just to kind of see the excitement from the nation in our country getting back to doing that, and knowing we played an important role in the plan of getting those guys home safely, it's a really rewarding mission," said Capt. Chris Burgess, a C-17 pilot for the squadron.

Fortunately, the National Guard units did not have to deploy.

“We talk a lot about no-fail missions, this was one of those missions you knew was absolutely 100% no-fail,” said Master Sgt. Colton Nelson with the 176th Operation Support Squadron. “The only we’re down there is if those astronauts are having the worst day of their life.”

The Hawaii Air National Guard took part in the training for the first time since it also has C-17s.

**Link:** <https://www.alaskasnewsresource.com/2021/02/18/inside-the-gates-alaska-air-national-guard-trains-to-help-rescue-american-astronauts/>

### **3. Air Guard’s training and education center welcomes new cyber commandant**

*DVIDS by Master Sgt. Mike Smith/Feb. 5*

*AKNG Excerpt:*

Before his arrival, Scott served as the Plans and Programs Officer for the Alaska National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Anchorage. He worked 26 years with a major shipping company in operations, personnel, and information systems technology in his civilian capacity.

**Read more:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/388436/air-guards-training-and-education-center-welcomes-new-cyber-commandant>

### **4. Wayne Don to become highest ranking Alaska Native currently serving in Alaska National Guard**

*KYUK by Greg Kim/Feb. 4*

The Alaska National Guard will soon have a general who is from the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. Calista Corporation board member Col. Wayne Don will be promoted to the rank of brigadier general on Feb. 7, becoming the highest ranking Alaska Native currently serving in the Alaska National Guard.

Don currently serves as the Director of the Joint Staff for the Alaska National Guard. In addition to being a Calista board member, Don is the chairman of his village’s corporation, Nunivak Island Mekoryuk Alaska Corporation.

Don’s promotion ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 7 at 1 p.m. via Zoom. Details on how to join the Zoom meeting are included below.

**Link:** <https://www.kyuk.org/post/wayne-don-become-highest-ranking-alaska-native-currently-serving-alaska-national-guard>

### **5. Alaska Army National Guardsmen get COVID-19 vaccine**

*DVIDS by Capt. David Bedard/Jan. 25*

Soldiers of the Alaska Army National Guard Medical Detachment hosted a COVID-19 vaccination drive Jan. 24, 2021, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson as part of ongoing efforts to vaccinate the force.

Dozens of Soldiers made their way to the JBER Armory’s drill hall floor by unit in order to facilitate social distancing and efficient administration of the vaccine, said Alaska Army National Guard 1st Lt. Jordan Gray, a registered nurse and Medical Detachment deputy director of clinical operations.

Kept in a frozen storage container, Medical Detachment medics removed one vial at a time containing 10 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine before pulling a single dose into a syringe and administering it to volunteer Soldiers who completed pre-immunization screenings.

According to Centers for Disease Control paperwork given to Soldiers at the vaccination site, the Moderna vaccine is being offered as a means to prevent COVID, which is caused by SARS-CoV-2.

“The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine is a vaccine and may prevent you from getting COVID-19,” the paperwork says. “There is no U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved vaccine to prevent COVID-19.”

Gray said the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine – the only vaccine used by the National Guard owing to its relative ease of storage – was made available under an FDA emergency use authorization. The vaccine is administered in two doses at least 28 days apart.

The lieutenant said the ultimate public health goal of widely administering the vaccine is to reach herd immunity when enough people have immunity, and the virus can’t freely transmit within the population.

The Health.mil COVID-19 vaccine page says, “Drugs and vaccines have to be approved by the FDA to ensure that only safe and effective products are available to the American public. During public health emergencies, when there is good scientific reason to believe that a product is safe and is likely to treat or prevent disease, the FDA may authorize its use through an emergency use authorization, even if definitive proof of the effectiveness of the drug or vaccine is not known.”

In an advisory message to the force, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, director, Defense Health Agency, Falls Church, Virginia, said trials involving thousands of people showed the vaccine is safe and is about 95 percent effective.

“There’s still a lot we don’t know about the long-term effects of COVID-19 infections, but we do know this: the vaccine offers the best-known protection from those effects,” Place said. “As a physician, I recognize the decision to receive the vaccine is a personal one, and the department’s policy is very clear that taking the vaccine is voluntary.

“But here’s my advice,” the general continued. “I encourage you to learn the details of the vaccine’s safety profile. If you have questions, talk to your healthcare provider. For the huge majority of us, the risk of an adverse event from the COVID-19 vaccine is much lower than the short- and long-term risk of the disease itself.”

Gray’s advice echoed those of the DHA director.

“Do it,” he said. “It is as safe a vaccination as you have ever had. You can change your mind. Saying ‘No,’ now isn’t your last opportunity. We hope you change your mind, and we respect your decision if you don’t.”

To schedule a vaccine appointment, Guard members should coordinate through their chain of command. For questions about the vaccine, Soldiers can call the Medical Detachment at (907) 388-3109, 176th Wing Airmen can call (907) 551-7662, and 168th Wing Airmen can call (907) 377-8940.

**Link:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/387589/alaska-army-national-guardsmen-get-covid-19-vaccine>

## **6. Alaska Guardsmen heading home after assisting with inauguration**

*Alaska’s News Source by Marlise Irby/Jan. 23*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - Over the next few days, Airmen and Soldiers of the Alaska National Guard will be heading back to Alaska, according to a release from JBER.

The Alaska National Guard assisted the District of Columbia National Guard and federal civilian authorities with the 59th Presidential Inauguration, according to a release from the Alaska National Guard.

"We train to be ready at a moment's notice, when requested to support civil authorities," said Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, in a written statement. "Those partnerships are built on trust and performance, and directly contribute to our success in domestic operations during natural disasters and emergencies."

Around 70 Alaska National Airmen and Soldiers joined nearly 26,000 Guard members from every state, territory, and District of Columbia to assist with the historic event.

"This showcased our ability to respond quickly with a volunteer force for a real-world mission," said Saxe. "Our ramp-up to head out, and the experience for the 70 Airmen and Soldiers on the ground only strengthened our ability to serve Alaskans at home."

Due to COVID-19, the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies limited the number of tickets to attend the event.

After the events of Jan. 6, civil authorities agreed that there needed to be a larger presence of National Guardsmen to assist to make sure the event was a success.

While in D.C., they were temporarily stationed inside of a parking garage, as seen in photos that have circulated on social media, but a troop leader for one of the three groups assigned to inaugural duties said the positioning made sense.

"During our duty periods, we have opportunities to take breaks while others swap out with us," said Ward, the medical readiness officer for the 176th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard. "The day before the inauguration, we were staged in a heated parking garage for about five hours, which was great because it was only 38-degrees outside." Alaska Airman, Capt. Jennifer Ward is a troop leader for one of Alaska's three groups assigned with inaugural duties.

Ward said the garage space was clean, had porta-potties, and they were able to rest before going back out.

Ward said, "It's important to take breaks in areas that are in close proximity to the zone we've been assigned so that we can respond quickly if needed, but so far that hasn't been necessary."

Military involvement in the Presidential Inauguration dates back 232 years.

**Link:** <https://www.alaskasnewsresource.com/2021/01/24/alaska-guardsmen-heading-home-after-assisting-with-inauguration/>

## **7. Alaska National Guard in DC to assist at inauguration**

*Army.mil by Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead/Jan. 20*

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Airmen and Soldiers of the Alaska National Guard departed here this morning just before 9 a.m., headed to Washington D.C. to assist the District of Columbia National Guard and federal civilian authorities with the 59th Presidential Inauguration.

After an unprecedented four hours between the official request for volunteers and a complete volunteer list—with two days to equip, process and validate mandatory training requirements for volunteers—70 Alaska National Guardsmen will join 25 thousand Guard members from every state and territory to assist with the historic event. They will provide crowd management; traffic control in and around the Capitol, National Mall and White House; as well as communications, logistical, medical, and public affairs support.

Enduring partnerships with local, state and federal agencies, built on trust and performance, directly contribute to the National Guard's success in homeland response. The Alaska National Guard assists civil authorities upon request, to perform missions we are equipped and trained for, when approved through proper channels.

"What you're doing is historic," said Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, speaking to troops at the Joint Mobility Complex on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson the day they were scheduled to depart. "This is a moment for the state, this is a moment for the nation, but this is a moment for you, as well, because you are doing what others are asking of you. You're standing up to help."

About 20 Alaska Guard Airmen arrived at Joint Base Andrews, Md. Sunday, and the other 50 arrived there today around 3 p.m. The KC-135 Stratotanker from the Alaska Air Guard's 168th Wing that transported the group today had a maintenance issue, delaying the original flight on Sunday. They were rescheduled to depart Monday morning, but were delayed a full 24 hours due to inclement winter weather conditions. The Guard men and women were air bound today despite wind, rain and snow over an icy runway that required additional plowing just before takeoff to ensure a safe departure.

"Despite the fact that we were delayed, the entire team is in good spirits and is motivated to get to D.C. and conduct the mission as we have been asked to do," said Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Grunst, troop non-commissioned officer in charge.

The National Guard is home to a wide variety of capabilities that can seamlessly integrate with interagency partners to enhance inauguration support capabilities.

Military involvement in the Presidential Inauguration dates back 232 years to when members of the U.S. Army, local militias (the modern-day National Guard), and Revolutionary War veterans escorted George Washington to New York City—the seat of government for his inauguration ceremony. The National Guard and other military units have continued this tradition of inaugural support ever since.

"Every night I'm on social media and see all of these things happening," said Staff Sgt. Kirielle Sjoblum, an intelligence analyst for the 168th Operations Support Squadron. "It's cool to have a chance to help instead of looking at it from afar," she said.

Volunteer Guard members will be part of an event that supports the peaceful transition of power and ensure the safety and well-being of their fellow Americans.

"You're ready, you're trained, let's get to it," said Saxe in his final comment to the troops.

Link: [https://www.army.mil/article/242527/alaska\\_national\\_guard\\_in\\_dc\\_to\\_assist\\_at\\_inauguration](https://www.army.mil/article/242527/alaska_national_guard_in_dc_to_assist_at_inauguration)

#### —ALASKA NEWS OF INTEREST—

### **8. Coast Guard ends search for missing former Alaska health executive's helicopter**

*Alaska Public Media by Nathaniel Herz/March 3*

*Update, 12:45 p.m.* The U.S. Coast Guard said Wednesday afternoon that it had suspended the search for Teuber's helicopter, and it offered its condolences to his loved ones.

In a prepared statement, the Coast Guard said the debris it spotted Tuesday were "consistent with" debris from Teuber's helicopter, though it did not confirm that that was the case.

"After an extensive search with our available assets resulting in inconclusive findings, it's with a heavy heart that we have to suspend this search pending any new information. I offer my deepest condolences to those affected by this incident," the statement quoted Cmdr. Matthew Hobbie as saying.

*Original story:* U.S. Coast Guard officials said Wednesday morning they can't confirm debris spotted Tuesday was from a missing helicopter piloted by former tribal health executive Andy Teuber. The debris was never recovered.

"Debris was seen by our crews, but we cannot confirm if it was debris from that helicopter at this time," said spokeswoman Alexandria Preston.

The Coast Guard said Tuesday night it was searching for Teuber after a family member contacted them around 5 p.m. to say he was overdue to arrive on Kodiak Island after leaving Anchorage's Merrill Field three hours earlier. His last known location was 66 miles northeast of Kodiak, the Coast Guard said.

Teuber resigned last week as chief executive of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. He was the subject of an Anchorage Daily News story earlier Tuesday describing how he stepped down the same day his former assistant accused him of sexual harassment and abuse in a letter to the consortium's board.

Preston, in an interview Wednesday, said the Coast Guard has not independently confirmed Teuber was in the missing helicopter.

"That's still information we're looking at. Right now, all we have is the report from the family member that the person was overdue," she said. "The rest, we don't have confirmation on right now."

The agency said late Tuesday it had found debris from Teuber's helicopter. But Preston, on Wednesday morning, said that report was incorrect: While debris was spotted, search crews never got their hands on it.

The search for Teuber continued Wednesday morning with an MH-60 helicopter from Kodiak and a Coast Guard cutter, she said.

Link: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/03/03/coast-guard-says-it-cant-confirm-debris-was-from-missing-former-alaska-health-executives-helicopter/>

—NATION/NATIONAL GUARD NEWS OF INTEREST—

**9. At the Capitol, a March 4 threat from militant Trump supporters proves a mirage**

*MSN News by Katie Mettler, Emily Davies, Meagan Flynn, Marissa Lang, John Woodrow Cox/March 4*

On the day when former President Donald Trump's most delusional supporters swore he would return to power — and the House suspended its business because of supposed threats to the U.S. Capitol — Washington looked on Thursday morning much the way it has for the past two months.

National Guard members armed with M4 rifles braced for rebellion that never came. Razor wire lined miles of steel fencing that went unbreached. Trump remained in Florida, where it was 70 degrees and sunny.

Capitol Police say intelligence shows militia group may be plotting to breach the Capitol

The angst stemmed from another misguided belief within QAnon, the extremist ideology that claims Trump has been working in secret to overthrow a cabal of blood-drinking, Satan-worshipping Democratic pedophiles. After repeated unfulfilled prophecies, the group's supporters declared in recent weeks that Trump would retake office on March 4, the country's original Inauguration Day.

That, of course, did not happen, but on Wednesday, the U.S. Capitol Police announced that they had identified a potential plot by a militant group to breach the U.S. Capitol, as hundreds of insurrectionists did on Jan. 6. The threat was apparently credible enough for the House to suspend a Thursday session, though the Senate still convened. And it came on a day when the Capitol Police sought to extend the Guard's mission by two more months.

Samantha Broaddus, 34, had heard vague references about a QAnon threat, but she didn't think much of it before arriving on the Hill for a dentist appointment and finding what looked like a fortress.

"It's more sad than nerve-wracking," she said, strolling down 2nd Street NW with her 9-month-old daughter, Isabelle. "D.C. used to feel so accessible to everyone who wanted. Now it's starting to feel like another country."

Along the fence, which stretches from the east side of the Supreme Court to the Mall, police shooed away anyone who lingered nearby.

"Have you seen the news?" they asked.

Outside the fence early Thursday, the neighborhood's streets were quiet. People walked their dogs in the morning sun and masked students sat on steps drinking coffee. Construction crews continued on with their projects.

For more a month now, people who live and work on Capitol Hill have navigated, and gradually accepted, the reality that this part of their beloved city has been converted into a militarized zone. No longer can they exercise on the Capitol lawn or rest on the steps of the Supreme Court. For many of them, Thursday was just another day in 2021.



About 5,200 guardsmen remain on duty in Washington, where the sprawling security operation costs \$2 million per week to maintain. The Guard's mission here is scheduled to end March 12, but Capitol Police have asked that it be extended for another 60 days.

"It doesn't make sense anymore," said John Kabre, who, before all that fencing went up, had a view of the Capitol from his shifts as an events coordinator outside of 101 Constitution. "I think people are overreacting."

At a press conference, even House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) played down the decision to cancel votes, arguing that the move was as much about accommodating Republicans attending an annual retreat as it was about any possible danger.

Unconcerned about the potential menace, Kabre smiled at passersby and encouraged them to enjoy the sunshine. He waved at National Guardsmen through the fence, some of whom he'd come to recognize over the last month.

By mid-morning, the Mall was peppered with cyclists, joggers and clusters of journalists. A trickle of people filed in and out of Union Station, where three American flags billowed at full-staff. A handful of Capitol Hill staffers hung around breaks in the fence for employee access.

At Freedom Plaza, skateboarders practiced kick flips on the same concrete squares where thousands of Trump supporters gathered the night before the Jan. 6 attack.

Two skaters, who declined to give their last names, argued over whether one of them had landed a series of tricks until the sound of a motorcycle vrooming down Pennsylvania Avenue interrupted them. They glanced at the bike, an American flag waving from its back end, before proceeding with the debate.

"That totally counts," Sean, 25, said of the maneuver that sent him leaping over his board.

Xavier, 27, shook his head.

The pair had no idea that March 4 was a day of any particular significance, nor that the District had again braced for possible violence at the Capitol.

The fencing posed a minor inconvenience as they tried to meet at their usual spot in Freedom Plaza, but besides that, little seemed out of the ordinary.

"I guess we're just used to foreigners, out-of-towners, whatever, coming into our city to cause trouble, you know?" said Xavier, who wore a hoodie emblazoned with Bart Simpson's sarcastic grin and crossed-arm pose. "Just part of being in the nation's capital these days."

Link: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/at-the-capitol-a-march-4-threat-from-militant-trump-supporters-proves-a-mirage/ar-BB1efhsM?ocid=ientp>

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